

Vaicaityte, Loreta; Vries, Sjoerd de; Haitjema, Mart

## **Continuous learning approach towards the professional development school in practice**

*Merkt, Marianne [Hrsg.]; Mayrberger, Kerstin [Hrsg.]; Schulmeister, Rolf [Hrsg.]; Sommer, Angela [Hrsg.]; Berk, Ivo van den [Hrsg.]: Studieren neu erfinden – Hochschule neu denken. Münster u.a. : Waxmann 2007, S. 234-243. - (Medien in der Wissenschaft; 44)*



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Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

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# **Studieren neu erfinden – Hochschule neu denken**



Marianne Merkt, Kerstin Mayrberger, Rolf Schulmeister,  
Angela Sommer, Ivo van den Berk (Hrsg.)

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## **Studieren neu erfinden – Hochschule neu denken**

Die Jahrestagung der Gesellschaft für Medien in der Wissenschaft im Jahre 2007, die in diesem Jahr in Kooperation mit der Campus Innovation durchgeführt wird, fällt mitten in eine bedeutsame historische Epoche. Die am 19.06.1999 in Bologna formulierte Erklärung von 29 europäischen Bildungsministern – „Der europäische Hochschulraum“ – und die Nachfolgekonferenzen in Berlin, Prag, Bergen und London haben einen enormen Reorganisationsprozess in den europäischen Hochschulen ausgelöst. Zeitgleich hat sich etwa seit der Millenium-Grenze die Einsicht durchgesetzt, dass eLearning ein probates Mittel für Lehren und Lernen sein kann.

Ob diese beiden Trends vereinbar sind oder wie sie sich gegenseitig befruchten können, ist noch nicht absehbar. eLearning wurde unter dem Motto des Neuen, der Innovation, des von Raum und Zeit befreiten Lernens erfunden. Die Implementation der konsekutiven Studiengänge setzt die Hochschulen jedoch unter einen äußeren Reformdruck, der kaum noch Raum für Innovationen lässt. Die Frage stellt sich, welche Rolle eLearning in dieser Situation übernehmen kann. Sind eLearning und Blended Learning doch mit dem Ziel der Qualitätsverbesserung der Lehre angetreten und haben damit ein altes Thema neu in die Diskussion gebracht – die prominente Funktion der Didaktik in der Lehre und für das Lernen? Wird dem eLearning nun angesichts der stark regulierten bologna-konformen Studiengänge eine eher glanzlose, funktionale Rolle zugewiesen?

Für die Lösung dieser Problematik scheinen die neuen Internettechnologien des Web 2.0 eine wichtige Funktion zu übernehmen. Lehrenden und Studierenden werden eher partizipative und produktive Rollen ermöglicht. Die Vorträge der Tagung bieten viele Beispiele, in denen ePortfolios, Wikis, WebLogs und partizipative Evaluationsverfahren genutzt werden, die ein völlig anderes Bild von Studierenden zeichnen. Ob diese Vision unter Bedingungen der Bachelor-Studiengänge realisierbar ist und welche Gestaltungsfreiräume dafür benötigt werden, dazu liefern die Vorträge interessante Anregungen und Konzepte.

Unter dem Motto „Studieren neu erfinden – Hochschule neu denken“ diskutiert die Tagung der GMW in Hamburg diese Fragen aus drei Perspektiven.

Im Vortragsstrang „Studieren neu erfinden“ werden Ideen für neue Lernszenarien und Konzepte zum partizipativen Lernen vorgestellt, auch angeregt durch neuere Entwicklungen auf dem Gebiet der Internettechnologie. Hypertext-, Portfolio- und Wiki-Methoden werden in ihrer Funktion für das kreative Schreiben und für die

stärkere Einbindung der Lernenden in den Lehrprozess und in ihrer Rolle als Mitproduzenten von Wissen betrachtet.

Die Vorträge zum Themenbereich „Hochschule neu denken“ diskutieren strategische Konzepte für die Integration von eLearning in die Hochschulen. Unter den Vorschlägen finden sich organisationale Maßnahmen wie die Bildung professioneller Gemeinschaften für eLearning oder der Einsatz von Evaluation und Assessment für die Personalentwicklung. Auch in diesem Feld liefern innovative Ideen einen strategischen Beitrag wie beispielsweise das politisch gemeinte Modell der Open Educational Resources.

Die Beiträge im Vortragsstrang „Neue Kompetenzen fördern“ setzen sich mit der Frage auseinander, welche Rolle eLearning für die Kompetenzentwicklung übernehmen kann. Darunter werden die Kompetenzen der Lehrenden wie der Lernenden verstanden. Unter diesem Thema werden auch die Potenziale des Web 2.0 für die Kompetenzförderung angesprochen. Die Unterstützung der Studienanfänger, der Erwerb fachlicher Kompetenzen sowie die Förderung berufsorientierter Sozial- und Handlungskompetenz, auch hier wieder durch aktive Einbindung der Studierenden zum Beispiel in der Evaluation, werden thematisiert.

Die Jahrestagung der GMW in Kooperation mit der Campus Innovation richtet sich an Lehrende, Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler, Verwaltungsleiterinnen und Entscheider aus Hochschule, Wirtschaft und Politik. Im vorliegenden Tagungsband finden Sie die Artikel, die den Präsentationen der Tagung zugrunde liegen, sowie die Zusammenfassungen der Keynotes und Postereinsendungen. Von 126 Einsendungen konnten nach wissenschaftlicher Begutachtung 36 Vorträge und 19 Poster präsentiert werden.

Unser Dank gilt an dieser Stelle allen Expertinnen und Experten, die eine Keynote oder einen Vortrag gehalten, das Panel vorbereitet oder daran teilgenommen, ein Projekt im Rahmen der Medida-Prix-Verleihung präsentiert, einen PreConference Workshop oder Tutorial geleitet, ein Poster präsentiert oder einen Marktplatz-Stand betreut haben. Ebenso danken wir den wissenschaftlichen Gutachterinnen und Gutachtern für ihre Mitarbeit. Mit den von ihnen eingebrachten innovativen Ideen, Konzepten, Ansätzen und Projekten und den wissenschaftlichen Diskussionen haben sie den aktuellen Diskurs zum eLearning in den Hochschulen weitergeführt.

Unser besonderer Dank gilt der Behörde für Wissenschaft und Forschung der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, insbesondere Herrn Senator Dräger für den Empfang der Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer der Tagung in der Handelskammer Hamburg, ebenso der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, insbesondere der Leiterin Frau Prof. Dr. Beger für den Empfang im Rahmen der Ausstellung „Mittelalterliche Handschriften aus dem Zisterzienserkloster Medingen“ sowie der Universität

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Bei der Redaktion der Beiträge wurden einige Vereinheitlichungen vorgenommen. Die auffälligste betrifft die vereinheitlichte Schreibweise aller Begriffe, denen ein e, e- oder E- vorangestellt war.

Rolf Schulmeister und Marianne Merkt  
im Namen aller Herausgeberinnen und Herausgeber,  
Hamburg im Juli 2007

GMW07-Website: <http://www.gmw07.de>

## **Continuous learning approach towards the professional development school in practice**

### **Summary**

The paper aims at designing a developmental model which could evaluate and support the reform in the Netherlands, called professional development school (PDS). PDS refers to collaboration between school and educational institution wherein the professional development of teachers is supported by specific conditions (Holmes Group, 1990 in Bergen, 2006). The higher education reform aims at implementing a better quality of education for primary school teachers. Two higher education institutions and five primary schools participate in this project. Document analysis, literature study and semi-structured interviews were carried out in order to design the model of PDS. There were 12 participants in the interview, namely, representatives from educational institutions, primary school coaches, primary school directors, students and PDS project leaders. There were 5 developmental models designed representing 4 significant perspectives in PDS. The results of the research indicate that the most helpful model to capture the development of PDS is a learning organisation model based on the comprehensive learning organisation theory (Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Watkins, Yang & Marsick, 2004). However, the design and application of the developmental learning organisation model is a challenging and creative task. Thus, the paper describes the concept of PDS and its application in practice simultaneously presenting different perspectives and models how to capture the development of PDS. Finally, it concludes with the discussion.

### **1 The professional development school: results and opportunities**

To start with, the professional development school (PDS) in the Netherlands was prompted by the continuous need for high quality education (Roelofs, 2003). The perceived lack of collaboration between the educational institution and future employer gave the direction for the reform (Geldens, Popeijus, & Bergen, 2003; Popeijus, German & Popeijus, 2006). PDS aims at satisfying all involved parties. First, the educational institution is expected to convey higher quality of education (Popeijus et al., 2006). Second, the primary school receives students whom they

prepare as future colleagues and who are reducing teacher's work load (Van Eck et al., 2006). Third, students enjoy learning from practice where they are being nurtured and coached (Roelofs, 2003; Bergen, 2006; Popeijus et al., 2006; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2007).

The concept of PDS originates from the USA. The analogy is "school based teacher education" in England. A PDS is aiming at the professional development of both, the future and the present teacher (Zeichner & Miller, 1997 in Bergen, 2006, p. 5). This complicated task is attained through development research about learning and education (Zeichner & Miller, 1997 in Bergen, 2006, p. 6). To make it clearer, a PDS is defined as collaboration between school and educational institution wherein the professional development of teachers is supported by four following conditions (Holmes Group, 1990 in Bergen, 2006, p. 7). The first condition is mutual sharing over the problems of primary education. Secondly, interchange between teachers and teachers-in-education is a significant item. Furthermore, there should be collaborative research over practical education problems. Lastly, collaboration is the main criterion of mentoring of the teacher-in-education (Bergen, 2006). Literature indicates that the improvement asks for change in the curriculum of educational institution, more precisely, better adjustment between at-the-school curriculum and out-of-the school curriculum (Roelofs & Toes, 2003; Van Eck et al., 2006; Popeijus et al., 2006). The advantage of this reform is more student-directed learning which combines practice and theory in a balanced and pleasant way (Bergen, 2006). Literature study and findings from previous researches indicate quality enhancement in education as a continuous process (Geldens et al., 2003; Roelofs & Toes, 2003; Bergen, 2006; Van Eck et al., 2006; Popeijus et al., 2006). That is the rationale why PDS should be constantly learning and improving. The central question then is how to describe the development of PDS. PDS refers to continuous collaboration between the preparing institution and receiving company. Therefore, creating and sustaining knowledge networks where communication and continuous learning occurs at all levels, becomes vital (Roelofs, 2003; Harrison & Kessels, 2004; Verwaard, 2007). To fulfil these conditions, an institution must reshape itself and form learning organisation (Senge, 1990; Swieringa & Wierdsma, 1992; Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Walton, 1999). Having shortly looked at the concept of PDS and related processes, in the following chapter we design and evaluate developmental models of PDS.

## **2 The development of PDS**

The chapter describes the theoretical basis of the research. The developmental models of PDS are designed and analyzed in order to find the most suitable framework to answer the main question of the paper.

## **2.1 Management perspective**

To start with, the management perspective is briefly presented. It is based on the INK management model which describes the reorganization of an institution to become a learning organization. The central aim of this model is continuous learning (Tillema & Markerink, 2004). The designed model depicts the PDS from management perspective. Firstly, new vision should stimulate the change in the school. Vision should be clear, acceptable and attainable for all involved parties (Senge, 1990; Swieringa & Wierdsma, 1992; Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Walton, 1999; Leithwood & Seashore, 2000). Secondly, leadership, policy, strategy and management should be well linked with the vision. Thus, leaders should act as agents of change and support the new vision through a proper leadership style. Besides, the formal strategy and policy should encourage suitable management of means, processes and employees. Policy and strategy determines goals and plans which should be well aligned with the means, processes and employee behaviour. Altogether the mentioned processes should lead to the following results: collaboration, transparency, continuous improvement, result-directedness and courageous leadership. However, it is important to note that these results are also preconditions of the learning organisation (Tillema & Markerink, 2004).

It is a cyclical model because evaluation of the results can lead to reformulation of the vision. In conclusion, the INK management model clarifies the process of reorganisation. The central element is a strong connection between vision and assistant processes which helps to achieve the results. The reasoning is the following: if the vision is clear and acceptable at all levels of the school and if management, leadership, policy and strategy are well aligned with vision, the end results should be reached. However, the INK management model does not formulate what form of management ensures the achievement of learning organization.

## **2.2 Communication perspective**

To continue with, PDS can be described from the communication perspective. Two theories were chosen for this purpose: sense making and actor network theory. To start with, PDS will be shortly described through sense making theory. “Sense making” process is the creation of reality as a continuous accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves (Weick, 1995). Sense making is the central activity in the construction of an organization and its environment, thus, it shapes organizational structure and behaviour (Weick, 1995). This model describes information processing in the various levels of school. Firstly, equivocality of information provokes action. Action enables selection which means interpretation of the ex-



perience (Griffin, 2003). This interpretation is also influenced by existing rules and communication cycles. Selection enhances retention of the existing procedures and norms. Furthermore, it can be claimed that retention creates environment because it builds the frames how employees perceive the surrounding context. If the environment is perceived as ambiguous, the described cycle repeats itself. If the environment sends uncertain signals, an employee should seek for clear information. When clear information is provided, the employee can always apply the common rules to deal with the situation (Griffin, 2003).

To conclude with, sense making is a descriptive model of handling the ambiguous information in an organisational environment. The model is cyclic, systematic and process-oriented. Thus, the focus of sense making is identification and interpretation of processes in any organisation (Weick, 1995). Sense making explains the connection between various events in the school. The main idea is that ambiguous situations should be dealt through communication cycles (Griffin, 2003).

In addition, the development of PDS can be described in terms of communication through actor network theory. The theory suggests that any organisation is a wide network of actors with many sub-networks (Kaghan & Bowker, 2001, Littlejohn & Foss, 2005). It is a cyclical model where black box 1 determines the input and results of one sub-network (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005). The black box 1 or sub-network of actors sends signals to a translation intermediary which is a sub-network, having a special function. An intermediary is defined as an actor of any type that stands at a place in the network between two other actors and has a translating function between the actors. An intermediary should translate in such a way that the interaction is effectively coordinated, controlled and articulated (Kaghan & Bowker, 2001). Outputs from this actor or sub-network are not isolated, they reach black box 2. If this actor identifies disorder, it enhances creative destruction. Creative destruction refers to reorganization of actor networks and redefines the expected performance of the whole organisation and the related sub-network (black box 1). The expected performance re-determines the inputs and outputs of black box 1. The cycle begins again. Thus, modifications in inputs and outputs change the performance of the whole system (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005).

To conclude with, actor network theory is broad and does not describe what elements the black box includes. Thus, this model is very flexible, but it does not give the answer to the central question. This model enables research of communication between the involved parties, but does not distinguish which elements of communication are important for PDS. For this purpose the identification of significant elements in the actor or sub-network should be supported by another theory. That is why this model serves general and descriptive purposes more than applied research purposes in this project.

## **2.3 Education perspective**

Furthermore, PDSs can be approached from an educational perspective. Adaptive structuration theory is the most informative systems paradigm from this perspective. To begin with, structuration is defined as the production and reproduction of social systems through members' use of rules and resources in interaction (Poole, 1996 in Griffin, 2003, p. 247). For the purpose of clarification, structuration is the process of social structures which shape people's actions and are shaped by people's actions (Poole, 1996 in Griffin, 2003, p. 247). The most important concepts in this theory are rules, resources, interaction, production and reproduction. Rules are implicit formulas for actions, while resources refer to the relevant personal traits, abilities, knowledge and possessions people bring in interaction. Resources are the relevant personal traits, abilities, knowledge and possessions people use in an interaction (Poole, 1996 in Griffin, 2003, p. 247). Production of social systems means the creation of social realities whereas reproduction refers to actions which reinforce features of the existing systems and thus maintains the current situation. Interaction identifies how people choose to act (Poole, 1996 in Griffin, 2003, p. 247). After having described the main concepts, the model adapted to PDS is presented.

The model describes that in a school there are rules and resources that reinforce PDS while on the other hand, there are rules and resources which inhibit the development of PDS. The rules and resources which support the development should be maintained. Therefore, the interaction form called maintenance should occur. Maintenance refers to the process that employees at all levels of an organisation behave in a way that enhances the existing rules and resources. Maintenance enables the reproduction of the PDS factors. Furthermore, there is always a tension between contradicting rules and resources. Reproduction of PDS factors increases this tension. The resources and rules which block the progress of PDS, become more visible and more intensive. They must be handled through an interaction form called change. Change stimulates the production of new conditions which in turn should create rules and resources strengthening PDS.

In conclusion, this model is cyclical and belongs to a social technology paradigm. Thus, the theory focuses on both: social and technological factors of an organisation (De Sanctis & Poole, 1994). The adaptive structuration model clarifies the decision making process in an organisation and identifies significant processes of any social system. However, the model alone is insufficient to answer the central question of the research because it does not specify which rules and resources reinforce the professional development school.

## **2.4 Learning organisation perspective**

PDS can be described in the framework of learning organisation. Learning organisation perspective was chosen for analysis of PDS because firstly, the school strives for continuous learning and improvement in all levels of organisation. Secondly, the new vision is reached through the awareness of learning of every employee and a connection of individual learning with the PDS vision. The parallel with the learning organisation is obvious then because the learning organisation enables learning at individual, team, organisational and environmental levels and results in the awareness of learning in all levels of the organisation (Walton, 1999). Thus, learning organisation is defined as a continuously learning social entity which strives for continuous improvement and is able to transform itself (Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

The authors developed a model called “learning organisation action imperatives” which describes the development of the learning organisation (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). To start with, the authors identify individual learning need and explain that this need is supported through two actions (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). The first action is the creation of continuous learning possibilities. The authors define continuous learning possibilities as organisation’s efforts to create continuous learning opportunities for all its members (Watkins et al., 2004). The second action is promotion of inquiry and dialogue. Inquiry and dialogue refer to the culture of questioning, feedback and experimentation (Watkins et al., 2004). Such culture promotes an open communication style which challenges the existing situation, but does not threaten the individual (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). To continue with, team learning is described as the central element combining individual and organisational learning (Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Walton, 1999). Team learning is achieved through collaboration and encouragement of team learning. Encouragement of collaboration and team learning is described as the spirit of collaboration and collaborative skills that ensure effective use of groups (Watkins et al., 2004). However, the successful individual and team learning does not necessarily ensure organisational learning. Therefore, two additional elements enhance organisational level of learning. Firstly, it is embedded systems which refer to efforts of establishing systems to capture and share learning (Watkins et al., 2004). This is a significant aspect where relevant media play a major role because embedded systems refer to e-learning, online knowledge centre and communities of practice. The second element is people empowerment toward a collective vision. It is defined as an organisational process to create and share a collective vision and get feedback from its members about the gap between the current status and the new vision (Watkins et al., 2004). Strategic leadership is an important factor encouraging collective vision. Lastly, it is insufficient for a school to learn on an organisational level. An educational institution has relations with the external world, namely

clients, who are firstly, students, secondly children and parents, however, there are other stakeholders. Therefore, PDS can be successful only when learning occurs at the environmental level which means system connection. System connection, according to Watkins et al. (2004), is global thinking and actions to connect the organisation to its external and internal environment.

To conclude with, the learning organisation model describes all levels of learning and examines the relations between them. All the levels are interconnected and the lower levels form the basis for learning at higher levels. Effective learning at all levels ensures continuous learning and improvement of the PDS. Thus, the learning organisation perspective embeds all the rest perspectives mentioned, namely, management, communication and education. It elaborates on the success factors of a learning organisation and gives the content how to manage, communicate and learn in a school which strives to be a modern work organisation. Thus, the developmental learning organisation model answers the central question and sub-questions of the research in an extensive way.

## **2.5 PDS: vision in practice**

The chapter aims at depicting the vision of PDS from practice. To reach this aim, semi-structured interviews with the participants of the reform were carried out. The participants were selected according to the representativeness and accessibility criterions. Firstly, the representatives of 2 educational institutions (Hogeschool and ROC) were interviewed. Secondly, the students who are doing internship in primary schools participated. Lastly, the representatives of the primary school were asked what their vision of PDS is. Content analysis was applied for the analysis of interviews. Results of the interviews have indicated that inquiry and dialogue, collective vision and collaboration were the most important factors of PDS. The most important elements of inquiry and dialogue were openness, good relations and trust. To continue with, employee awareness at all levels, identification of development needs and clear vision were perceived as the crucial elements of collective vision. Lastly, collaboration and team learning referred to working together, involvement and learning together. The interesting aspect was that none of the participants mentioned the importance of systems of sharing and capturing learning. That might indicate that educators are not well adapted to media application as digital database, online tacit and explicit knowledge centre and e-learning. However, according to literature, the embedded systems are very important for knowledge productivity on the organisational level. Furthermore, document analysis shows that there are knowledge centre and digi-board which serve this function. Based on the content analysis, sub-elements of the learning organisation were specified and instruments to follow the development of PDS

were designed. Based on the comparison of the theoretical models and results of the interviews the most suitable developmental model was selected.

### **3 Discussion**

To start with, a model should answer well the main research question and sub-questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to the literature, the theoretical model should be practical and clear (Britt, 1997). It should strive for simplification of the phenomenon as well as completeness of the phenomenon (Britt, 1997). That means that the most important processes and their relations should be depicted (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Most important is that the model is helpful to explain and intervene in the developmental processes of PDS (Britt, 1997). The good model also allows comparison between various PDS. Above all, it is central how informative and valuable the model is for the phenomenon. From the first point of view, PDS strives mostly for the connection of organisation to its environment, which refers to network creation or environmental level of learning. But to be successful at this level, all the other levels of learning should function well. Therefore, organisational, team and individual levels are significant signals of the development of PDS.

The analysis has indicated that the development of PDS can not be extensively explained through sense making model. Sense making captures only one part of PDS and this part does not include success factors of PDS. Secondly, results have shown that the development of PDS is not fully depicted by adaptive structuration model. It can be argued that PDS develops itself partly through the adaptive structuration, but the model does not simplify the existing processes, on the contrary, it makes them more complicated and it is not very helpful for answering the central question and further intervention. Furthermore, this model focuses only on the organisational level, thus it is limited to grasp the processes in each level. Thirdly, the development of PDS can be partly explained by the actor network model, but again the creation of networks is only one element of the learning organisation. Thus, it does not provide the complete overview of PDS and does not answer the central question and sub-questions of the research. Fourthly, the INK management model describes the management strategy of the learning organisation, but is limited to indicate the development of PDS. This model might be helpful in practice, but it does not give valuable and complete answers to the research questions. Lastly, the comparison between the models has indicated that the learning organisation model suits best for the research purposes. It explains extensively the development of PDS, identifies success factors of the learning organisation and categorizes concrete actions. To conclude, the developmental model of learning organisation answers the research question and sub-questions

and gives insights and better understanding of the development of PDS. The changes in vision, strategy and management of PDS indicate that it develops itself through becoming a learning organisation. Furthermore, the learning organisation model answers how people should be managed, how they should communicate and how they should learn and be trained in PDS. It involves all the levels of learning in an organisation, therefore, it provides possibilities to detect the problematic area and provide recommendations for improvement. On the other hand, the learning organisation model is broad as well as the elements of learning organisation are very generally defined. Therefore, classification of the actions to elements can be an uneasy task and specification and selection among sub-elements are necessary. But this is probably a common difficulty while trying to answer such a broad question as the development of PDS. The next challenge is the design of the valid and reliable instruments to evaluate the development of PDS which is a continuous process till it reaches the desired stage.

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